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Automated Serial Permanent Charge-Out
FD-5a (1-5-94)

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Reason for Permanent Charge-Out:

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Russian reporter -- outspoken critic of Russia's Chechnya's policies -- killed

MOSCOW (CNN) -- A Russian reporter known for her outspoken criticism of Russia's Chechnya policies was found dead, police said, and colleagues think it was a political killing.

Anna Politkovskaya worked for Novaya Gazeta, a newspaper based in Moscow. A neighbor shot dead late Saturday afternoon in her building's elevator. A handgun and four empty cartridge cases were also found.

A law enforcement source said a young man might have been involved in the incident and police were looking for him, the Interfax news agency reported. Recently, she had been working on a series of reports about the Chechen prime minister Ramzan Kadyrov, installed by the Kremlin to control Chechnya. (Posted 3:06 p.m.)

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Investigation into Chechen camp claims

February 25, 2001

Web posted at: 10:15 AM EST (1515 GMT)

NAZRAN, Russia -- A Russian journalist's claims that she had found evidence of a detention camp where Chechens are held in pits will be investigated by prosecutors in Chechnya, a news agency has reported.



The Chechnya conflict has caused devastation

Chechen Prosecutor Vsevolod Chernov told the Interfax agency on Sunday that his office was looking into the allegations by journalist Anna Politkovskaya.

"Politkovskaya's reports were not quite exact and her statements for the press and for the prosecutors were mutually contradictory," Chernov said.

"But prosecutors will check this information and announce the results to the public."

Politkovskaya, a reporter with the liberal Moscow newspaper Novaya Gazeta, was detained in Chechnya last week because she was not carrying the right documents to work in a war zone, Russian officials said.

She said in a television interview after her release that the real reason she was detained was because she had uncovered evidence of the pits.

Vladimir Kalamonov, the presidential commissioner for human rights in Chechnya, will travel to the breakaway republic later this week to check on the reports, Interfax said.

Kalamonov said there was no proof that Russian soldiers were holding suspected Chechen rebels in pits, but that he would "thoroughly examine the territory and find out whether a filtration camp is located on it," Interfax

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reported.

The Council of Europe's commissioner for human rights, Alvaro Gil-Robles, was scheduled to arrive in Moscow on Sunday and make a two-day visit to Chechnya later in the week.

Twelve Russian soldiers have been killed in Chechnya over the past 24 hours, an official in the Moscow-backed Chechen administration said on Sunday.

The Russian military claims to have defeated the rebels' main forces in Chechnya, but it suffers daily losses in the hit-and-run attacks by rebels and to land mines placed by the insurgents.

Russian troops failed to suppress Chechnya's independence bid during the first 1994-96 war. They returned to the republic in September 1999 following rebel incursions into a neighbouring region and apartment bombings blamed on the rebels.

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Dispatches from a savage war

Poison and death threats won't stop Anna Politkovskaya from reporting the truth about Chechnya. She talks to James Meek

Friday October 15, 2004
The Guardian

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Anna Politkovskaya was born into Soviet high society; the kind of privileged, metropolitan elite that knew abroad better than it knew the factories of the Urals, and whose children were guaranteed comfortable jobs in the rambling bureaucracies of Moscow. Half a life later, in her 40s and a mother of two children, Politkovskaya found herself alone at night in the Chechen hills, fleeing through the darkness. She was running from the Russian security service, the FSB, which wanted to arrest her, but out there in the highlands of a lawless region steeped in bloodshed, she could have fallen victim to anyone or anything; Chechen bandits, Russian or Chechen government death squads, a broken neck. It was Europe, in 2002.

"I walked the whole night," she says. "I wanted to stay alive! It was terrifying. I reached the [Chechen] village of Stary Atagi at dawn. I stayed there for a day and a night, keeping my head down ..." She talks about it for a while, then seems to check herself, feeling perhaps that telling a stranger about one of the numerous occasions in her career as a journalist that she faced a threat of imprisonment or serious harm is irrelevant to the serious business of reporting. "These are just details," she says, finally.

In the bland setting of a publisher's London flat, you can see in Politkovskaya, one of the bravest of Russia's many brave journalists, the different ages of her life, and her looking serious in each of them: the bookish student of the 1970s, the earnest, curious young Soviet reporter, the journalist who embraced the freedoms of perestroika in the late 1980s, the veteran of Russia's recent conflicts who returns time and again to Chechnya to enrage the Kremlin leadership as it seeks to make of Vladimir Putin an infallible khan.

Her seriousness is not just her frown, her severe glasses and full head of grey hair. It's the tension, anger and impatience in her whole body, making clear that her sense of the continual injustice being perpetrated in her homeland never leaves her, that she can't shut it out in a way almost all British journalists, even the campaigning, radical kind, can.

It's a surprise, then, to see her start to laugh and make fun of the Guardian's photographer when he gets her to pose for him. "Photographers always do that," she says, in her hesitant English. "They get people to do things they don't normally do." The photographer gets quite annoyed and you realise that Politkovskaya is still young (she's 46). And still hopeful. The author picture on the back of her new book, Putin's Russia, is so self-consciously tragic, and its subject matter so bleak, that I ask her whether she thinks it might take generations for her country to become truly free.

"I wouldn't ever want to say it would take generations," she says. "I want to be able to live the life of a human being, where every individual is respected, in my lifetime."

Politkovskaya was born in New York, where her Soviet Ukrainian parents were UN diplomats, in 1958, five years after the death of Stalin. She was sent back home to be educated and after school entered one of the most prestigious university departments in the USSR, the journalism faculty of Moscow State University. Among its other advantages, her parents' diplomatic status

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enabled them to smuggle banned books into the country for her, and she was able to write her dissertation about a normally forbidden poet, the emigre Marina Tsvetayeva.

After graduation, Politkovskaya worked for the daily Izvestiya, then moved to the in-house paper of the state airline monopoly Aeroflot. "Every journalist got a free ticket all year round; you could go on any plane and fly wherever you wanted. Thanks to this I saw the whole of our huge country. I was a girl from a diplomatic family, a reader, a bit of a swot; I didn't know life at all."

With the coming of perestroika, Politkovskaya switched to the independent press which began to emerge and flourish: first Obshchaya Gazeta, then Novaya Gazeta (New Newspaper). None of the terrible things that have happened in Russia since the coming to power of the reformer Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 have persuaded Politkovskaya that it would have been better to preserve the USSR.

"From an economic point of view, life became very difficult," she says, "but politically it wasn't shocking at all. It was simple happiness, that you could read and think and write whatever you wanted. It was a joy. You need to endure a great deal in the way of economic hardship for the sake of freedom."

Hardly had the new countries of the former Soviet Union begun to stand on their feet, however, than a series of internal wars broke out. The most savage of them, continuing to this day, involves various attempts by Russian government troops to regain control over the small region of Chechnya. Politkovskaya became one of the most dogged reporters of that conflict.

Russians speak of two Chechen wars: the first, under Yeltsin, from 1994 to 1996, ended with a peace deal and troop withdrawal under pressure from the media and public. When Putin invaded for a second time, in 1999, he took steps to ensure that the media would not embarrass him with reports about the reality of Russia's brutality in Chechnya. If, as Politkovskaya believes, stopping the first Chechen war was the Russian media's greatest achievement in the relatively free Yeltsin years, the second Chechen war has been its greatest disaster. Once an independent voice among many, Novaya Gazeta is now among the few Russian media outlets which have not yet been intimidated into toeing the Kremlin line.

The second Chechen war began by costing Politkovskaya her marriage. She returned home to Moscow one day in 1999, fresh from reporting on a long-range Russian rocket attack in Grozny which had hit a market and a maternity hospital, killing scores of people, including women and children, to hear her husband tell her: "I can't take this any more." Recently, it almost cost her her life, when, on her way to Beslan in the early hours of the school hostage crisis, she was slipped poison in a cup of tea. In between, she has experienced countless death threats from Russian troops, Chechen fighters and the other, more shadowy armed groups operating in the margins of the war. The kidnappings, extrajudicial killings, disappearances, rapes and tortures she has reported on in Chechnya have left her convinced that Putin's policies are engendering the terrorists they are supposed to eliminate.

"To this day there's torture in any FSB branch in Chechnya, like the so-called 'telephone', where they pass an electric current through a person's body. I've seen hundreds of people who've been through this torture. Some have been tortured in such an intricate way that it's hard for me to believe that it was done by people who went to the same sort of schools that I did, who read the same textbooks."

Politkovskaya has no regrets about the times she has stepped outside the role of reporter in recent Chechen terrorist attacks - as a negotiator in the Moscow theatre siege, and as a would-be negotiator at Beslan, before she was poisoned. "Yes, I went beyond my journalistic role," she says. "But it would be quite wrong to say that doing so was a bad move from a journalistic point of

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view. By setting aside my role as journalist I learned so much that I would never have found out being just a plain journalist, who stands in the crowd along with everyone else."

She has harsh words for what she sees as the west's kid-glove treatment of Putin and Russia. "Most of the time they forget the word Chechnya. They only remember it when there's a terrorist act. And then it's, 'Oh!' And they start their full coverage up again. But virtually nobody reports on what is really going on in that zone, in Chechnya, and the growth of terrorism. The truth is that the methods employed in Putin's anti-terrorist operation are generating a wave of terrorism the like of which we have never experienced."

The Bush-Blair "war on terror" has been of enormous help to Putin, Politkovskaya says. Many people in Russia gained perverse comfort from the pictures of US abuses in Abu Ghraib prison. "I've heard it many times. In Russia you hear people talking about it with pride: that, 'We treated the blacks like this before the Americans did, and we were right, because they are international terrorists.'

"Putin's begun to try to prove on the world stage that he's also fighting international terrorists, that he's just a part of this fashionable war. And he's been successful. He was Blair's best friend for a while. When, after Beslan, he began to state that we were seeing virtually the hand of Bin Laden, it was appalling. What's Bin Laden got to do with it? The Russian government created these beasts, brought them up, and they came to Beslan and behaved like beasts."

The only way for the west to regain moral authority, Politkovskaya argues, would be for it to treat Putin as it treats Alexander Lukashenko, the autocratic, bullying president of Russia's neighbour Belarus - not sanctions, but a more personal, tailored form of ostracism. "It's impossible to talk on the one hand about the monstrous scale of victims in Chechnya and the spawning of terrorism and then lay out the red carpet, embrace Putin and tell him: 'We're with you, you're the best.' That shouldn't be happening. I understand, our country's a big market, it's very attractive. I understand it very well. But we're not second-class people, we're people like you, and we want to live."

• Putin's Russia by Anna Politkovskaya is published by Harvill. To order a copy for £8.99 with free UK p&p, call the Guardian Book Service on 0870 836 0875, or go to

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Anna Politkovskaya

Anna Stepanovna Politkovskaya (Russian: Анна Степановна Политковская; 30 August 1958 – 7 October 2006) was a U.S.-born^[1] Russian journalist and human rights activist well known for her opposition to the Chechen conflict and the Putin administration. She was shot to death in the elevator of her apartment building on 7 October 2006.

Politkovskaya made her name reporting from Chechnya for Russia's liberal newspaper, Novaya Gazeta. Her writing was often polemic, as bitter in its condemnation of the Russian army leadership and the Russian government as it was fervent in support of human rights and the rule of law.^[2] Her murder, seen as a contract killing, caused a strong international reaction.

Biography

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Early life

Politkovskaya was born **Anna Mazepa** in New York City in 1958 to Soviet Ukrainian parents, both of whom served as diplomats to the United Nations. She studied journalism at Moscow State University, graduating in 1980, and began her career with the Izvestia newspaper.

Career

From June 1999 to 2006, she wrote columns for the news publication Novaya Gazeta. She published several award-winning books about Chechnya, life in Russia,^[3] and President Putin's regime,^[4] most recently the book Putin's Russia. She often received death threats as a result of her work.^[5] In 2001, Politkovskaya fled to Vienna, following e-mail threats claiming that the OMON police officer whom she had accused of committing atrocities against civilians was looking to take revenge. The officer, Sergei Lapin, was arrested and charged in 2002, but the case against him was closed the following year.^{[6][7]} In 2005, Lapin was convicted and jailed for torturing and "disappearing" a Chechen civilian detainee, the case exposed by Anna Politkovskaya in the article "The Disappearing People".

She had, on several occasions, been involved in negotiating the release of hostages, including the October 2002 Nord-Ost crisis in which Chechen terrorists stormed a Moscow theatre. Politkovskaya was also involved in supporting the legal rights of victims' families.

During the Beslan school hostage crisis in September 2004 and while on her way to Beslan to help in negotiations with the hostage-takers, Politkovskaya fell violently ill and lost consciousness. Politkovskaya never made it to the school and claimed that she was

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poisoned after drinking tea on the flight to Beslan.^[8] However, the cause of her illness has not been determined, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists.

While attending a conference on the freedom of press organised by Reporters Without Borders in Vienna in December 2005 Politkovskaya said: *"People sometimes pay with their lives for saying aloud what they think. In fact, one can even get killed for giving me information. I am not the only one in danger. I have examples that prove it."*^[9] In Moscow she was not invited to press conferences or gatherings that Kremlin officials might attend, in case the organizers were suspected of harboring sympathies toward her. Despite this, many top officials talked to her when she was writing articles or conducting investigations -- but only when they weren't likely be observed: outside in crowds, or in houses that they approached by different routes, like spies.^[10]

Politkovskaya received wide acclaim for her work in Chechnya^[11], where she frequently visited hospitals and refugee camps to interview the victims.^[12]

Her numerous articles critical of the war in Chechnya included allegations of abuses committed under the Russian-backed Chechen president Akhmad Kadyrov, as well as his son, deputy prime -minister, then prime-minister, Ramzan Kadyrov. She also wrote a book critical of the Putin presidency, specifically his pursuit of the Second Chechen War. She tirelessly chronicled human rights abuses and policy failures in Chechnya and elsewhere in Russia's North Caucasus. In 2003, she published a book called *A Small Corner of Hell: Dispatches From Chechnya*, which painted a picture of brutal war in which thousands of innocent citizens have been tortured, abducted or killed at the hands of Chechen or federal authorities. First she was hiding from the Russian federal troops, but always able to make contact clandestinely with individuals through trusted intermediaries, so that her informants would not be denounced to the top generals. Some officials sheltered her in their homes in the most trying months of the war.^[13]

She said about herself that she was not an investigating magistrate but somebody who describes the life of the citizens for those who cannot see it for themselves, because what is shown on television and written about in the overwhelming majority of newspapers is emasculated and doused with ideology. Therefore, she said, the Kremlin tried to block her access to information.^[14]

Assassination

Politkovskaya was found shot dead on Saturday, 7 October 2006 in the elevator of her apartment block in central Moscow.^{[15][16][17][18]} Police said a Makarov pistol and four shell casings were found beside her body. Early reports have indicated a contract killing, as she was shot four times, once in the head, but it is currently unclear who ordered the killing.

Novaya Gazeta editor Dmitry Muratov said that on the day of her murder, Politkovskaya had planned to file a lengthy story on torture practices believed to be used by Chechen security detachments known as Kadyrovites which are loyal to pro-Moscow Prime

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Minister Ramzan Kadyrov. A day after Politkovskaya was found dead, police seized her computer hard disk and material she had assembled for an investigative article; the story may now never be published. Additionally, Muratov said, two photographs of the suspected torturers have disappeared.^[19]

Prosecutor General Yury Chaika is personally overseeing the investigation. His office said investigators were considering Politkovskaya's professional work as the primary motive for her murder. Billionaire State Duma deputy Alexander Lebedev, who bought 90 percent of Novaya Gazeta in June 2006, has posted a reward of 25 million rubles, just under US\$1 million, for information leading to those responsible for Politkovskaya's death, Ekho Moskvy reported.

The funeral was held on Tuesday, 10 October, at 2:30 p.m., at the Troyekurovsky Cemetery. Before Politkovskaya was laid to rest, more than 1,000 people filed past her coffin to pay their last respects. Dozens of Politkovskaya's colleagues, public figures and admirers of her work gathered at a cemetery on the outskirts of Moscow for the funeral. No high-ranking Russian officials could be seen at the ceremony.^[20]

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Related assassinations

Anna Politkovskaya was only one of many journalists recently murdered in Russia. The list of criminal cases from "Glasnost Defense Foundation" led by Aleksei Simonov from Moscow Helsinki Group includes 9 killed and 59 attacked (severely beaten) journalists, and 11 attacks on editorial offices only in 2006 (from January to October). [5] (<http://www.gdf.ru/>). In 2005, the list of all cases includes 6 murders, 63 attacks, 12 attacks on editorial offices, 23 cases of censorship, 42 criminal prosecutions, 11 illegal layoffs, 47 arrests, 382 lawsuits, 233 cases of obstruction, 23 closings of editorial offices by authorities, 10 evictions, 28 confiscations of printed production, 23 cases of stopping broadcasting, 38 refusals to distribute or print production, 25 acts of intimidation, and 344 other violations of Russian journalist's rights [6] (<http://www.gdf.ru/monitor/2005/2005.shtml>).

In a more recent development, ex-KGB officer Alexander Litvinenko died in London, following a lethal dose of radioactive polonium-210^[57] ^[58], while investigating Politkovskaya's death. The Litvinenko death is currently under investigation by the British authorities ^[59] ^[60]. This incident was remarkably similar to poisoning by thallium of KGB defector Nikolay Khokhlov ^[61], and another journalist from Novaya Gazeta Yuri Shchekochikhin (Юрий Щекочихин) ^[62] ^[63]. The journalist who prepared the interview with Khokhlov for Novaya Gazeta was Politkovskaya ^[64]. The last book by Shchekochikhin was *Slaves of KGB* (Рабы КГБ). He also investigated the Russian apartment bombings as a member of the Kovalev Commission with Mikhail Trepashkin. Litvinenko was writing a new book about FSB activities including concentration camps in Chechnya. In that regard, he had frequent contacts with Politkovskaya, according to Larisa Volodimirova ^[65].

Former KGB officer Oleg Gordievsky believes that the murders of Zelimkhan Yandarbiev, Yuri Shchekochikhin, Politkovskaya, Litvinenko and others mean that FSB has returned to the practice of political assassinations ^[66], which were conducted in the past by the Thirteenth KGB Department ^[67].

Other similar cases are assassinations of Russian politicians Galina Starovoitova and Sergei Yushenkov and death of journalist Artyom Borovik who tried to investigate russian apartment bombings.

On November 24, the day of Litvinenko's death, Russian economist and politician Yegor Gaidar was apparently poisoned after drinking a cup of tea. He was taken to hospital but survived ^[68] ^[69]. This incident was similar to the poisoning of Politkovskaya on her flight to Beslan.

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